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U.S. National Security— The Next 50 Years

Harold Brown

Paul H. Nitze Award Lecture

The CNA Corporation

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Introduction

The Paul H. Nitze Award honors the leadership of Paul H. Nitze, a Trustee of The CNA Corporation, for his long and distinguished service to our country. He has shaped the issues and events that are the landmarks of modern national security policy: the strategic bombing survey, the Marshall Plan, the H-bomb debate, NSC-68, the Korean war, the Berlin and Cuban missile crises, Vietnam, SALT, INF, and START.

Harold Brown has devoted himself to understanding and shaping the scientific, technical, policy, and political aspects of national and international security. Like Paul Nitze, his record of public service reflects an unusual degree of vision, wisdom, and accomplishment. He's renowned for the brilliance of his intellect, the breadth of his interests, and the depth of his commitment to the security of the United States.

Both during his tenure as Secretary of Defense and thereafter, Harold Brown had had a particularly strong impact on strategic nuclear issues, setting in place policies and programs that serve as the foundation of U.S. strategic policy to this day. He made major organization changes within the Department of Defense and strengthened U.S. relations with friends and allies around the globe—most particularly with our NATO partners.

Since leaving government, Dr. Brown has been an advisor to senior leaders and a thoughtful commentator on national security affairs, and has helped shape the future leadership of the national security community.

CNA has presented the Paul H. Nitze Award to five other distinguished leaders in the area of international security:

- Sir Michael Howard—decorated officer in the Coldstream Guards during World War II, teacher to generations of students of military history and international security affairs, and influential advisor in international security matters

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- James Schlesinger—former Secretary of Defense, first Secretary of Energy, Director of Central Intelligence, and long-time leading intellectual and shaper of security policy of the United States and the North Atlantic Alliance
 - Sam Nunn—former Senator and chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee for 8 years, leader in national security and alliance affairs, principal architect of improving NATO's conventional deterrent, and promoter of nuclear safety and rigorous control of nuclear weapons
 - William Perry—former Secretary of Defense, champion of the development of stealth technology and of the cruise missile, and throughout his career, a leader in the practical, the technical, the policy, and the political aspects of national and international security
 - Lee Hamilton—elected to the House of Representative for 17 terms, with a record of understanding, articulating, influencing, and improving national security and foreign relations.

Harold Brown has joined a distinguished group. His record of public service, like that of Paul Nitze and the other award recipients, reflects a singular, sustained influence on national security and international relations.

We are pleased to be able to make available this sixth in the series of Paul H. Nitze Award lectures.

Robert J. Murray
April 2000

U.S. National Security—The Next 50 Years

Prologue

Let me begin by expressing my thanks on receiving this year's Paul H. Nitze Award from CNA. I am proud to be associated with my predecessors in this status and delighted with the name of the award itself. Paul Nitze and I have known each other for 40 years, not a long time in his life, but a considerable portion of anyone else's. Paul and I first crossed paths at a conference at Asilomar in California in 1960. I gave a talk that neither I nor anyone else remembers, while he gave one that caused him considerable difficulty with a certain segment of the political spectrum for years afterwards.

During the decades that followed, Paul and I have been colleagues and intellectual interlocutors, usually agreeing, sometimes disagreeing, with one of us in government and the other out, both of us in, or both of us out. Throughout, I have admired the sharpness of his intellect, the tenacity of his purpose, and his ability to think coolly and analytically—all of which explain why his service has been effective and his views have continued to be influential to the present moment.

I remember, for example, a meeting of the Armed Forces Policy Council in 1967 or 1968 at which Paul suggested that, from a purely strategic point of view, the appropriate course for the United States, as the number-one power, would be to strike a deal with the number-three power—the People's Republic of China—in opposition to the number-two power—the Soviet Union. And that was three-and-a-half years before Nixon's trip to China. That kind of foresight, trained on a more distant future, and how to achieve it is the subject of my remarks this evening.

The past 50 years

During the Cold War, U.S. national security policy had a clear unifying principle, expounded in George Kennan's Long

Telegram and Paul Nitze's NSC-68. It was to contain the Soviet expansionism that was fueled by both its ideological and nationalistic objectives, while deterring nuclear attack on, or intimidation of, the United States and its allies. In some ways that concept may have been too dominant in U.S. policy. Regional issues were invested with global significance, sometimes mistakenly. We supported some dubious clients and we made some bad mistakes. But fundamentally the policy was correct. Containment worked and deterrence worked. They provided the shield under which market economies won out and world output grew. The first half of the 20th century had been, on average, a catastrophe. The second half ended with humanity, on average, much better off than when it began.

Now the world is substantially more complicated, and a single unifying principle to provide clear guidance in specific cases is absent. Imminent or even distant threats to the existence of the United States are harder to posit in a believable way than they were during the Cold War, when the danger was very real. Even situations that meet the lower standard of clear threats to U.S. national interests seem rather remote. But there remain, nevertheless, many significant security problems around the world. Some of them affect us directly; many others don't now, but could in the future.

Security objectives

We need to think about how the United States should behave to minimize the chances that the 21st century will produce horrors of the magnitude that characterized so much of the 20th. How can we preserve U.S. national security, which I define as protecting the United States and its population from externally generated harm, whether military attack, economic decline, or political or social disruption? It's easy to come up with slogans—"Peace and Freedom" is a good example. But let's look at a few more-specific elements of U.S. national security policy, and perhaps even their relative priority.

The most fundamental security objective is preserving U.S. national existence, its territorial integrity, and its form of government. To that end, an overriding priority is to prevent, by a variety of military and non-military means, direct attack on the United States by conventional, nuclear, chemical, or biological warfare either by adversarial national actors or by non-state elements. Opposing the rise and ambitions of a hostile hegemon dominating either end of the Eurasian continent has been a constant of U.S. security policy throughout the 20th century and will remain so, joined by a similar view of the Persian Gulf. That objective implies a continued high priority for alliances and protection of allies. A third element is assuring access to natural resources that we need to import and to markets for our products, through flows of trade and investment. And some of the instruments to advance these primary goals include support of market economies, democratic governments, human rights, and protection of the environment.

Though much more specific than "Peace and Freedom," these priorities are still broad enough for one to recognize potential or actual conflicts among them. Economics and technology play an increasing role in most of them, especially as they become even more globalized.

What I've said so far could be described as a view from Mars or from an academic conference. A view in military terms would look at the problem of national security in a narrower, more specific light. It would ask what military capabilities will be required, along with economic and political ones, to support our goals. We can also imagine some consensus on those capabilities, although there would be considerable difference of opinion.

Required military capabilities

I would still put at or near the top of a list of required military capabilities a secure nuclear deterrent against nuclear attack and possibly against attack by other weapons of mass destruction. Next would be an ability for global projection of con-

ventional military power. We need to be able to strike from a long distance precisely, quickly, and with the ability to penetrate surely through defenses—at both fixed strategic and mobile tactical targets—with bombers from distant land bases, with cruise missiles from arsenal ships or other vessels, and from closer in with effective land- and sea-based tactical air. We also need control of the seas and the ability to win major regional conflicts (MRCs), whether one or two, through the rapid deployment of theater forces.

In the controversy about simultaneity of two MRCs, my view was, and is, that, given an inevitable limit on military resources, the original formulation of win-hold-win was sensible; it worked in World War II. An important ability in ground warfare yet to be developed will employ distributed units, tightly linked by communication and using comprehensive battlefield awareness, battle management, and C⁴ISR to call in precision strikes from a distance and to establish control on the ground. Additional important capabilities, difficult to achieve, include significant active defenses against weapons of mass destruction and the ability to prevail in warfare in urban areas.

That's an expensive and challenging menu, but the United States clearly has the ability to achieve a reasonable level of those capabilities—if not at 3 percent of gross domestic product, then at less than 4 percent.

I would add a caution, however. The need for a long view, the accelerated effects of new technologies, and the increased uncertainty about the nature of future geopolitical and geostrategic developments all argue for devoting a larger, not a smaller, share of defense expenditures to research and development, especially exploratory development. It has become even more important now than it was during the decades of the Cold War for the national security complex to be fully aware of current and prospective scientific and technological advances in the civil sector. To do so, it must be involved, both by its own parallel efforts in the corresponding military applications and by funding univer-

sity research and "think tank" policy studies. This future-oriented effort should not be slighted in favor of the last 10 or 20 percent of the priority list for current or near-term capability.

In thinking about how to shape a U.S. national security policy for the next half-century as NSC-68 shaped it for the near half-century of the Cold War, we need to add at least two more considerations to those general goals and those particular military capabilities. One is the nature of the world of the next five decades. I'll come back to that. The other is the set of political-military approaches that, along with the economic and diplomatic ones, should connect the military (and other) capabilities with each other and with the previously mentioned goals. Here is where the issues become more contentious than the main elements of national security policy with which I began, or than the specific military capabilities I have outlined.

Some questions

Let me raise some exemplary questions. When should the U.S. act unilaterally and when should we condition our actions on being multilateral? To what extent should we count on the nations of the developed regions as allies and partners even though in some sense they will be economic competitors (despite globalization and the increasing importance of multinational corporations)? They may in turn ask how far they can count on us. Russia will recover and China and India will modernize, and each aspires to great-power status. What policies should we pursue to avoid adversarial relations with China and Russia while at the same time discouraging them from hegemonic ambitions that could threaten others? Will they come to be—will they choose to be—incorporated into an international concert of powers that promotes peaceful and stable growth within themselves and elsewhere in the world? Or should we begin now to try to protect ourselves against the prospect of an adversarial alliance among rising and resurgent powers?

Is conflict between the richer and the poorer nations inevitable, and does globalization of technology and the spread of knowledge about weapons of mass destruction make the contest more equal than it has been in previous centuries? To what degree can (and should) we confine our foreign policy and the official actions of our government in dealing with foreign countries to the question of how they treat their neighbors? When does internal injustice, conflict, or civil war within a country warrant external military intervention, and by whom, unilaterally or multilaterally? And that leads to the question of micro-nationalism; what group of people should be able to decide that they constitute a sovereign state? It is not their numbers or their clear ethnic identity; Tuvalu, a Pacific Island nation of 10,000 people is about to be admitted to the UN, while more than 20 million Kurds have no such prospect.

Suggested policies and related issues

At this next level down toward specificity, my own evaluation of alternatives leads me toward the following lines for U.S. policies.

We should continue to take the lead in maintaining the alliances with other developed nations that worked well in the last half of the 20th century. The lack of an overarching military threat at present makes successful continuation of close alliances uncertain, even with adjustments. But these nations—Western Europe, Japan, Canada, and Australia, along with a few others, including some aspirants to or members of NATO, EU, and OECD—sufficiently share economic status and political institutions, so that our interests (and also our principles) converge more than they clash. Moreover, the group as a whole has two-and-a-half times the economic and demographic weight of the United States alone. Those facts suggest that, in facing the knotty problems we have in common, added strength is worth the compromises and dilution of U.S. freedom of action that will often be required. But not always—sometimes we may well have to act alone.

Though the misdirection and misuse of developmental aid has often distorted and even retarded the economic and political progress of its recipients, the balance of U.S. national security spending needs adjustment in the direction of non-military assistance (now less than 3 percent as large as the defense budget, and under 0.1 percent of USGDP). Early and proper use of such aid offers at least a chance of avoiding costly military action later.

Disapproval, and corresponding political action, of the way another nation treats its own people is a legitimate, in some cases even mandatory, reaction for the United States and for other governments committed to human rights. Sadly, that will often bolster our self-esteem more than it will help the objects of its concern. Economic penalties imposed by private groups are a matter of their choice; economic boycotts by our governmental authorities, however, should consider not only whether it benefits more than it harms the oppressed in the target country, but also its effect on U.S. economic welfare.

As to the further step of the use of military force in such cases, caution in military intervention in response to internal tyranny, internal ethnic conflicts, or civil wars, whether unilaterally or multilaterally, should be the rule. We should first be convinced that we will not be making things worse and that we are prepared to deal with the future behavior of the side on which we are intervening.

Threats or aggressive actions against other countries by such regimes, however, are another matter. Collective response by multilateral organizations, by coalitions of the willing, or even unilaterally by the U.S., depending on the degree of U.S. national interest involved, is called for.

I recognize that more than one quite different set of policies can legitimately be advanced—and they are. Isolation plus unilateralism: attending to "the city on the hill," building a 20-foot wall around it to keep out foreigners, and an impervious dome in the sky to keep out weapons of mass destruction caricatures one

such approach, but its elements appeal to a significant part of the public and of the political class. One potential difficulty of that approach is seen instead by some as a plus: no trade equals less competition. At the other end of the spectrum, the policy of being a pure "civil power" without the ability to use force (popular in Japan) is the logical consequence, if not the stated goal, of policy thinkers who regard U.S. militarism and overweening triumphalism as the principal threat to world peace.

The troubling thing about those alternative policies of isolation or of renunciation of military capability is that there is some justification for them—not much, but enough to make us think. And when it comes down to concrete decisions in time of crisis, the questions raised by those who subscribe to them will need to be answered, even if the basic U.S. policy continues along the lines outlined earlier.

Thus, U.S. behavior in hypothetical crises—such as a Chinese move against Taiwan, or an escalating conflict between India and Pakistan, or an Iraqi or North Korean attack on a neighbor (with a threat to use weapons of mass destruction on our forces or on U.S. territory should the U.S. intervene)—though guided by the previously stated principles and the somewhat more-specific policies, will be determined in detail by the actual circumstances. The local military balance, our assessment of the reactions of the adversary, attitudes of allies and of other major powers, the ways in which the multi-branched scenario may play out—all these must influence U.S. decisions. And so will analyses (or guesses) about how various results would affect the broader world picture. That used to mean how it would affect the balance of the U.S.-Soviet competition. Now it means something much more complex.

The next 50 years

At this point you may well be inclined to ask, "After 50 years in the national security arena, doesn't Harold Brown have

anything new to tell us?" Perhaps not, but let me at least make a few observations about the next 50.

The issues I've already noted are difficult enough, and many of them will have to be settled over and over again. The greater number of players and interactions and the lack of a single overarching principle will probably make case-by-case analysis and resolution the rule. Moreover, the global context within which these issues will have to be dealt—political, economic, technological, environmental, and cultural—will be changing much more rapidly over the next 50 years than during the past 50.

In political terms, the nation-state will face challenges and erosion of its position from above and from below. Supranational agencies, from the European Union up (or down) through the UN to the International Monetary Fund, from the International Court of Justice to ASEAN to APEC, will play an increasing role. Though almost all of them are constituted by and are, in principle, the tools of national governments, their bureaucracies are coming to have a life of their own, and, increasingly, some of the organizations will limit actions of their constituent governments, as their charters prescribe. For example, the movement toward supranational currencies—the euro, dollarization in the Western Hemisphere—limits the economic freedom of action of some nations. Devolution of authority downward to subnational units or to cross-border regions is also taking place. Non-governmental organizations, less accountable than governments at any level, draw away governmental authority from the side, as it were. Multinational corporations pose difficulties for governments and vice versa. And globalization in the form of more rapid movement across national boundaries of capital, goods, services, and even labor will move more quickly in the next 50 years than they did in the era of the Cold War. Yet, despite these changes, most individuals continue to regard themselves as citizens of a nation-state rather than of a region or the world; this is true even in Europe.

Mass destruction of economic centers and populations reached an intensity in World War II not known, at least in the West, since the Thirty Years War. The past 50 years have seen episodes on a much lesser scale. But during the next 50 years, instruments of mass destruction are likely to proliferate. Whether their employment either across national boundaries to great destructive effect or in wars or terrorism within national boundaries can be prevented is an open and troubling question. Nuclear warfare has been demonstrated to be so terrible that a high barrier still remains, but chemical warfare has already been used in the Iran-Iraq war and within Iraq against the Kurds.

What may not yet be fully appreciated is that all of this will take place within both the promise and the shadow of unparalleled further technological change. The revolution in information technology and telecommunications, already so evident during the past two decades, is accelerating and will explode over the whole world during the next decade or so, embedding vast computing power in manufactured products of all kinds and flowing huge volumes of information around the whole world at very low cost and very high speed. That will change economies, cultures, and military systems out of all recognition. In my view it will be a one-time revolution, transforming daily life—perhaps as did, or even more than did, the railroad, the automobile, or electric power—but not the self-image of mankind.

In contrast, the biotechnology revolution, which to many has seemed disappointingly slow in fulfilling its promise (or threat), will in my judgment continue for a longer time, through the whole of the next 50 years. And it is likely to have even more transforming effects. Quite aside from what it will do to human health, longevity, and demography, it could clone humans and alter the genetic constitution of individuals or groups. Thus it will challenge what we think of as individual identity and even our definition of humanity. Moreover, neuroscience, which is in its infancy even compared with our knowledge of molecular biology, and which will prove even more difficult and complicated to

unravel, will provide keys to human behavior, the application of which for good or ill may go far beyond anything we have yet seen. The biotechnological revolution has already had clear, though as yet modest, medical and agricultural applications, but neurobiology and behavioral biology could well dwarf even the foreseeable effects of genetic engineering.

Of two trends visible for the next 50 years, then, one is encouraging, the other troubling. Globalization and technological advance imply that economic output, and with it living standards, will continue to advance, perhaps accelerate. The affluent world will become more so even while other regions (unfortunately, probably not all) will move from being poor countries to being rich ones, as Japan did from 1950 to 1975 and the East Asian tigers did from 1975 to 2000. And that affluence will make individuals freer, at least in external ways.

At the same time, the spread of new technologies and connections have made and will make it easier for both individuals and states to damage each other, whether by weapons of mass destruction, through the internet, or by as yet unknown uses of neuroscience. In response to these forces and to environmental concerns, political authority may act (and may have to act) to invade privacy, restrict autonomy, and control actions. How these forces play out will determine whether the world of the 21st century is really a brave new world or a dystopia disguised as one—or, rather, what the mixture will be.

Conclusion

Many of these issues of the global context in which the decisions our political leaders and our publics will be making over the next 50 years have been addressed individually, if superficially. Papers have been written postulating alternative world situations in the year 2020 or 2030 from the point of view of international security. But they have not been in-depth or comprehensive examinations of the interactions among these various sweeping changes, suggesting how they will affect U.S.

security, how to plan for them, how to try to influence them in favorable directions (however defined), or how to prepare our capabilities—military, economic, diplomatic, educational, cultural—to deal with them.

How can analyses of these issues be done appropriately and effectively? Not within the government, I fear. The pressure for dealing with the next international crisis, the next internal or external pressure group, the next election, is so great that even a strategy for dealing with the next five years and an understanding of the context in which that strategy needs to be formulated is beyond what government officials at almost any level are able to provide. There are, squirreled away in some not very well-known places, small groups that work on it. The Office of Net Assessment in the Office of the Secretary of Defense has made some tries, though not on the comprehensive scale I've been describing. The war colleges can do something, but circumscribed institutional mandates that one-year students and faculty reach at those institutions rule them out as a full solution. Universities do better at depth in a discipline than in interdisciplinary breadth; promotion there has become too dependent on skills in abstract theory and has too often penalized rather than rewarded experience as a practitioner or an interest in practice to offer much hope for solutions there, although Op-Ed solutions to current problems will continue to appear from some faculty members. Some think tanks, if they get support to do it, may have the cross-cutting skills and project discipline to bring together teams to deal with this sort of study of global futures. In the end, even there it will depend on the existence of a few synthesizing minds to provide the leadership for this sort of long-term thinking.

In any event, it's worth trying to find or create institutions to carry out such analyses. Without the corresponding guidance, we will probably be able to muddle along, though at greater risk. Even with it, avoiding catastrophe will still depend upon the ability of national and private sector leadership to respond skillfully to events whose details can never be predicted. But, with

this kind of conceptual framework, an increased ability to shape trends and events could reduce the number and gravity of the individual crises and unexpected developments. Who knows—we might even be able to deal with global warming and threatened asteroid collisions.

I know I have raised more questions than I have provided answers. But I am convinced that we had better begin to understand those questions and to arrive at a process for answering them if we are to survive the next 50 years with anything like the real success that we look on as having been achieved in the past 50, despite its tragedies and near-catastrophes.

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